

VZCZCXRO8041
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSI #2191 3291359
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241359Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0452
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 002191

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: FORMER SPEAKER BURJANADZE LAUNCHES NEW
POLITICAL PARTY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT, REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (C) Summary. On the fifth anniversary of Georgia's Rose Revolution, former Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze (and twice interim President of Georgia) officially launched her new political party "Democratic Movement United Georgia" in a packed basketball arena of 1800 supporters. In accepting the new party's leadership position, she recalled her role in the successes of Saakashvili's government -- improved energy supplies and economic climate -- but criticized the Saakashvili government for losing the war in August and not achieving enough democratically. The party congress was well-staged and well-financed. Burjanadze appears to have found solid financing and showed on the November 23 that she will be a relevant political voice in Georgia. Her next challenge will be to build her political popularity. End Summary.

THE FORM

12. (C) On November 23, in a basketball arena in Tbilisi, former Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze officially launched her Political Party "Democratic Movement United Georgia" (DMUG), announced the members of the governing council and accepted the party's leadership role. The arena was packed to overflowing on a Sunday afternoon and the majority of the crowd of 1800 people appeared to be in their 30's and 40's, slightly older than the usual crowd drawn by President Saakashvili's UNM. The crowd was supportive, but not overly enthusiastic. In addition to Burjanadze's supporters, many Ambassadors -- including the U.S., British, French, German, EU and OSCE -- attended. British Special Envoy to the Caucasus Sir Brian Fall, in town for the 5th anniversary of the Rose Revolution, also made an appearance.

13. (C) The arena was professionally staged with expensive-looking backdrops, large TV screens and theater lighting. DMUG's logo and printed materials were professionally produced. While no mention of the funding for the event or the DMUG was made, it appears that Burjanadze has been successful in raising funds.

THE SUBSTANCE

14. (C) An advisor close to Burjanadze told us prior to the event that Burjanadze would focus her remarks largely on the unfulfilled promises of the Rose Revolution (Note: Burjanadze had been one of the three members of the "troika" that ushered in the Rose Revolution in 2003. That troika included Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze and the late Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania. End Note.) She pointed out that the Rose Revolution had yielded benefits for ordinary Georgians including improved energy supplies and a growing economy. She took some credit for those successes. Nonetheless, Burjanadze cited failures of the current leadership to implement reform in the court system, promote individual liberties and liberalize the media, and she focused her arguments around the point that Georgia needed new leadership because Saakashvili had mismanaged the conflict in August. Burjanadze told her supporters that Georgia had spent 15 years getting Russian bases out of Georgia, only to face two

new ones now. She said that the President's impulsiveness had moved Georgia backwards. In her printed materials (emailed to EUR/CARC), she wrote, "What is needed today is moderation instead of impulsiveness, professionalism instead of superficiality, pragmatism instead of inadequacy." Burjanadze promised to develop a detailed platform to present to the public shortly.

15. (C) Comment. Burjanadze is taking a page out of Saakashvili's play book. She has a well-designed party with a substantive platform that is being presented as an alternative to Saakashvili and the United National Movement. While the names of those on the DMUG's governing council are not well-known to us and the sources of the party's financing are unclear, Burjanadze is positioning herself and her party to attract votes no matter when the next election is scheduled. End Comment.
TEFFT